



## Fairfax County, Virginia Department of Management and Budget

# Performance Measurement Matters

## Upcoming Performance Measurement Training Opportunities

- Basic PM Class on June 19 from 8:30-11:30 a.m.
- Data Collection on June 19 from 1:00-4:00 p.m.
- Surveying for Customer Satisfaction on June 20 from 8:30-11:30 a.m.
- Managing for Results on June 20 from 1:00-4:00 p.m.

Sign up online using the Pathlore system. Space is limited so don't delay. While there is no prerequisite for the Basic PM Class, you must take it in order to take any of the remaining three classes.

Manuals for each of these classes can be found on the DMB Web site (see above far right corner).

## County Executive Addresses Brownbag Lunch—Discusses Strategic Planning

Advertise a brownbag lunch with the County Executive on the topic of strategic planning and the result is a roomful of interested and engaged County employees. This was the scenario on May 2, 2006 when County Executive Tony Griffin addressed the Performance Measurement Team's quarterly brownbag lunch. A wide range of agencies were represented, with staff seeking to learn the County Executive's vision for the next phase of strategic planning. As the County Executive noted, "The topic is timely because the Executive Team is currently sorting through the best way for the organization to approach Phase II of the strategic planning effort."

He noted that in Phase I, he exercised the "demand management



function" of requiring all agencies to prepare a strategic plan. That was in 2002 and agencies had 15 months to produce a plan. At that time, the County Executive em-

phasized that he was more interested in the process than the product, and in particular, wanted agencies to involve as many people as possible. He also explained that it takes time to (continued on page 2)

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## Fairfax County Hosts Ninth Annual Regional Performance Measurement Consortium

From Albemarle County in the west to Virginia Beach in the east, and north to Montgomery County, participants came to the ninth annual Regional Performance Measurement Consortium hosted by Fairfax County on May 10, 2006. This group was started by Fairfax County's Performance Measurement Team in 1998 to enable par-

ticipating jurisdictions to share their experiences with regard to performance measurement in order to learn from each other, rather than having to re-invent the wheel. This spring, representatives came from various neighboring jurisdictions and elsewhere in Virginia and Maryland. The main topic was "Performance Audits" with

Arlington County's Comptroller, Barbara Liechti, providing a comprehensive overview of how that locality undertook its performance audit program. She took the group from the start of the program in January 2005 when the Arlington County Board of Supervisors first directed its staff to contract out for performance (continued on page 2)



**County Executive Tony Griffin shares his thoughts on the next phase of strategic planning in Fairfax County with a wide range of County staff interested in the topic.**

*"Plans must be simple and flexible...They should be made by the people who are going to execute them."*

*- George S. Patton*

**Attendees at the May 2006 Regional Performance Measurement Consortium:**

- Albemarle County
- City of Alexandria
- Arlington County
- Fairfax County
- Loudoun County
- Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission
- Montgomery County
- Prince William County
- City of Virginia Beach

## County Executive Addresses May PM Brownbag Lunch Group (continued from page 1)

really understand the process. Since strategic plans typically have a useful life of 3-5 years, most agencies' plans are reaching the point where it is necessary to go back and see if the plan is still relevant or if it needs updating. This time, the County Executive stated he will be more oriented toward the product. By that, he meant plans that can be understood and used by other agencies. This tends to preclude those large "War and Peace" size documents that are too lengthy for the initiating agency to get its arms around, much less expect other agencies to understand

them. County Executive Griffin envisions having a strategic planning template that will enable agency heads to read each other's plans so that one agency's plan is not in conflict with another's. Ultimately all plans could be placed in one binder for the Board of Supervisors and the public to also understand the direction in which the County is going.

The County Executive also cautioned the group that we will face challenges for the coming budget because "the days of expansive revenue growth are

over." Through April 11, 2006, real estate sales in the County have been flat and since approximately 60 percent of County revenue comes from this source, the FY 2008 budget will require difficult choices. He noted that the budget is the tactical plan for implementing the strategic plan and the challenge is to offer programs at the level and quality that available resources can support. This involves asking if we need to be doing a particular service, and if so, at what level? He added that the strategic plan is the platform for asking those types of questions.

## County Hosts Annual Regional PM Consortium (continued from page 1)

audits of various programs. Under the guidance of a steering committee known as the Committee for Program Performance, Arlington County requested input from all of the County's advisory groups regarding which programs should be studied. The first selected was the Medical Care for Inmates Program due to huge cost increases experienced by this program. The other two identified were the Site Plan Review Process and the Capital Improvement Program. Arlington released a Request for Proposals (RFP) for these three studies last fall. The first study on Medical Care for Inmates was completed in January 2006 and is available on the Web at:

<http://www.arlingtonva.us/departments/Sheriff/JailMedicalReport.pdf>

According to Arlington County Comptroller Barbara Liechti, the

consultant "did an amazing job" identifying 65 separate recommendations primarily oriented toward cost control. Since their current contract for medical care for inmates is up for renewal, the results of the performance audit presented an opportunity to incorporate some of the cost efficiencies in the upcoming RFP.

Presenting for the City of Alexandria were Derek Argust from the City Manager's Office and Morgan Routt from the Office of Management and Budget. While the impetus for the program also began with their City Council, the City of Alexandria took a slightly different approach—orienting its performance audits toward agencies as opposed to programs. The Alexandria Fire Chief volunteered his agency to be among the first studied. The second selected was the Department of Transportation

and Environmental Services (Public Works agency). The City issued its RFP in July 2005. Despite anticipating proposals from large consulting firms that could address multiple agencies, they found that the market for performance audits or "best practice efficiency studies" as they are called in Alexandria, is oriented toward niche or "boutique" consultants, those specializing in a particular program area. Consequently, two different firms were selected for the two agencies to be studied. They began their work in late November and final recommendations have not yet been made public.

As was the case for Arlington, Alexandria relies on an advisory group comprised of citizens with expertise in the areas to be studied. The next agencies to be studied are Fleet Services and Parks and Recreation, with all agencies ultimately reviewed.

## Survey Data Prove Valuable

By Sara Daleski, Department of Systems Management for Human Services

Through Fairfax County's performance measurement effort, the service quality aspect of performance focuses on customer satisfaction, timeliness or accuracy (depending on the service being measured). Consequently, a large part of the focus of surveys as part of performance measurement has been on this aspect – how satisfied customers are with County services. However, another type of survey that is extremely useful is one that helps identify behaviors and other characteristics that can be used in planning County programs. One such example is the County Youth Survey.

In December 2005, Fairfax County conducted its third survey of County youth to assess youth risks, strengths and assets. Ongoing analysis of the data from the 2001, 2003 and 2005 youth surveys continues to provide valuable information for those interested in positive youth development. Planning for and administration of the youth survey is a collaborative effort involving multiple County agencies, Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) and the Fairfax Partnership for Youth.

The 2005 survey was administered to 14,434 sixth, eighth, tenth and twelfth grade students. The results provide parents, other residents, service providers and policy-makers with Fairfax County-specific data about youth substance use, mental health, health and delinquent behaviors.

Both FCPS and County agencies use the risks, strengths and assets data in designing and improving programs and services for youth. Data collected through previous surveys were also used in applying for more than \$5.5 million in state and federal grants for prevention, treatment and after-school programs for youth in

County agencies, schools and community organizations. Having local data on youth risk behaviors is important for many of these grants and significantly improves the County's ability to leverage funding.

Data from the youth surveys can also be used along with other information to support a number of performance measures for youth services. For example, reducing youth involvement in illegal substance, gang or other delinquent activity may improve community health, which can lead to improved educational outcomes for youth. Indicators comprising the youth survey data are also influenced by other domains. For example, increasing family involvement in a child's education may result in higher academic achievement, and increase the likelihood that youth will continue education beyond high school. A highly educated workforce is one of the County's strongest attributes.

Results from the 2005 Fairfax County Youth Survey are scheduled to be released in June 2006. This survey was designed to meet the specific data needs of Fairfax County. Survey findings support and assist the Coordinating Council on Gang Prevention by examining the relationship between self-reported gang membership, delinquent behaviors, risk and protective factors, and alcohol and drug use. Data from surveys also have policy implications for prevention, intervention and suppression strategies, and provide information on correlates of gang involvement and the impact of gang participation on school performance, school behavior and school climate.

Emphasis was on access to current and broad-based data for drawing comparisons. The ability to compare Fairfax County youth risk behaviors and assets

with current national-level data has always been a requirement of both the School Board and the Board of Supervisors. The survey focused on the rate of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use by adolescents. It also included measurement of specific protective factors or "assets" that empower adolescent resiliency from such risk behaviors as drug use, delinquency and violence.

The 2005 survey process ensured that students from special populations such as those who speak other languages, participate in alternative programs and/or are enrolled in special education were included. Mental health, suicide, depression, bullying and aggression questions included in 2001, but not in the 2003 Virginia Community Youth Survey (VCYS), were included in the 2005 survey. These questions were selected from nationally used, peer-reviewed survey instruments in order to ensure validity and reliability. The responses to these questions provide extremely valuable information essential in understanding our youth.

Sixth grade students were included in this survey. Because many students responding to the 2001 survey indicated that they first engaged in risky behaviors before the age of 12, the School Board approved the inclusion of a sample of sixth grade students in 2003. As in 2001 and 2003, parents of students selected in the survey sample were informed of the survey content and were provided an opportunity to preview the survey questions and to sign an "opt out" form to exclude their student from participation in the survey.

Undertaking a survey such as this, even once, requires a huge commitment — both in terms of staff and other resources. However, the participating bodies recognized the considerable benefit to be gained from regular and systematic assessment of youth risks, strengths and assets. The results of these surveys provide valuable data upon which to plan essential programs to safeguard County youth. These data are critical for effective strategic planning and performance measurement efforts.

For questions about the 2005 survey, please contact:

Denise Raybon, Fairfax County Prevention Coordinator, Department of Systems Management for Human Services  
(703) 324-7124

Sara Daleski, Department of Systems Management for Human Services  
(703) 324-7135

P.D. O'Keefe, Fairfax County Public Schools Safe and Drug Free Youth Section  
(703) 876-5264

Laura Yager, Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board  
(703) 934-8774

Tricia Hutcherson, Fairfax Partnership for Youth  
(703) 324-5703

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*"Data from the youth surveys can also be used along with other information to support a number of performance measures for youth services."*

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### A BIG THANKS to PM Team members "retiring" from the team:

- Sara Daleski
- Evy Duff
- Liz Henry
- Ed Jones
- Cathy Spage

### And a BIG WELCOME to new members:

- Tom Crow
- Marie Custode
- Lorraine Jackson
- John Kapinos
- Jennifer Zindler





### A Fairfax County, VA publication

Department of Management and Budget  
Suite 561  
12000 Government Center Parkway  
Fairfax, VA 22035  
Phone: 703-324-2391  
Fax: 703-324-3940  
TTY: 711

**We're on the Web:**  
**[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dmb](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dmb)**

### About Fairfax County's Performance Measurement Program:

In 1997, Fairfax County, Virginia dramatically re-oriented its performance measurement system to one that addresses a balanced picture of performance through the use of a Family of Measures — Output, Efficiency, Service Quality and Outcome. Since that time, agencies have focused their efforts on providing a complete picture of performance, including both efficiency and effectiveness. These data are included in the County's annual budget. In addition, that document also includes a considerable number of benchmarking comparisons. These can be found in the program area summaries for Volume 1—General Fund, as well as in several Non-General Fund agencies in Volume 2 of the annual budget.

*Performance Measurement Matters* is published quarterly by the PM Team. Editors: Barbara Emerson and Bill Yake, Department of Management and Budget, with articles by PM Team members, both current and past. Other County employees may submit ideas for articles or questions to either of the above-listed individuals. Your input and suggestions are always welcome. To request this information in an alternate format, call the Department of Management and Budget at 703-324-2391, TTY 711.

### PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT TEAM

Feel free to contact any member listed below if you have any questions/comments about the County's Performance Measurement Program

NAME	AGENCY	PHONE	E-MAIL
Barbara Emerson, Coordinator	Department of Management & Budget	324-3009	BEMERS
Lisa Blecker	Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board	324-4426	LBLECK
Michael Cash	Office of Human Rights	324-2953	MCASHO
Norman Chmielewski	Department of Administration for Human Services	324-5978	NCHMIE
Kristen Cigler	Department of Community & Recreation Services	324-5306	KCIGLE
Tom Crow	Health Department	246-8470	TCROWO
Marie Custode	Department of Systems Management for Human Services	324-4540	KCUSTO
Lorraine Jackson	Department of Public Works & Environmental Services	324-1835	LJACK1
Mila Jao	Department of Finance	324-3150	MJAO00
John Kapinos	Police Department	246-4278	JKAPIN
Laura Lazo	Department of Management & Budget	324-2049	LLAZOO
Allison Lowry	Department of Family Services	324-3528	ALOWRY
Doug Miller	Fairfax County Public Library	324-8322	DMILL4
Eric Mills	Department of Vehicle Services	324-3527	EMILLS
Bill Yake	Department of Management & Budget	324-2030	WYAKEO
Jennifer Zindler	Department of Information Technology	324-4543	JZINDL